

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

We want to hear it. Send us your thoughts: Lariat-Letters@baylor.edu

Cut the crap, not calories

Don't weigh in on holiday weight changes, waist measurements

ERIKA KUEHL
Opinion Editor



As a fashion fanatic myself, I know better than anyone how quickly trends begin to take flight. One day we love Mary Janes, the next, slouchy knee-high boots. And just like everything else, our bodies have been commodified and become a trend.

With rumors of Ariana Grande's drastic weight loss and Kylie Jenner fitting into her pre-motherhood jeans, the question I beg is — why are we even talking about their bodies?

As many Gen X'ers begin to inject their weight-loss drug of choice, it can foster a flurry of confusion within ourselves.

"I should start making my resolutions now, right? Yeah, maybe I shouldn't have a roll with Christmas dinner. Wow, my aunt has nothing on her plate. Let's make sure to go on a run in the morning."

It's not unique to have these feelings during the holiday season. This internal dialogue can ruin that trip with your sibling to get hot chocolate or your dad's famous chocolate chip cookies. It can turn a time of reunion into feelings of deep loneliness and anxiety.

This holiday season, let's try and change the conversation to something beyond how many pounds we've lost or gained. Shifting the focus onto other things can not only be for you, but also for other people in the room who don't know how to speak up.

It's so normal to hear our parents' generation discuss how much weight they've gained during menopause or how they want

to lose a few pounds before their big summer cruise. Instead of engaging in this conversation, just walk away. Setting boundaries is the best way to enjoy yourself this holiday season.

If a conversation isn't suiting you and causing internal turmoil — exit. A good way to shift focus is to compliment whoever is speaking negatively about their body. And I don't mean complimenting them on their body, but rather, on something that's not physical.

Telling your aunt who struggles with confidence that she lights up every room is the perfect distraction to deter negative conversations. Making sure your younger sister knows how proud you are of her? That is an important dialogue during the holidays.

Some family members won't be around next Christmas. How silly would it be to have their last holiday meal centered around the newest weight-loss drug or how slim a celebrity looks?

Tell your family you care about them regardless of how they appear on the outside. Make sure everyone enjoys a piece of pumpkin pie, if that's their thing. And if you ever feel like you need help with disordered eating or an eating disorder, you can contact the National Eating Disorders Helpline at (800) 931-2237 or text "NEDA" to 741741 for support.



Associated Press

Home for the holidays? Make the most of the time

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

For some, winter break is a time of peace, rest and joy. For others, though, the end of finals season is met only with added stress around the inevitability of a month at home. Even for those with a good home life, moving back home for a month while extended family comes into town can be a recipe for disaster. Let's face it — a month of living at home after a semester at college is hard.

The holidays can be an aching reminder of a lost loved one. For others, it can be full of stress from family members asking about money, post-grad plans, significant others or friendships at school.

Real families have issues. They have tense meals and strained relationships. Being at school doesn't fix those things; it just helps us forget about them. Regardless of the issues, our families are still our families. And what's a better time to express our love for them than the holidays?

An immense amount of growth happens while away at school. You may feel a bit misunderstood when coming home for an extended period of time. Instead of getting upset, understand that your family has grown too while you were away. You are not the same person that left, and they aren't either.

We remember what it was like to have an older sibling leave for college. It can be hard for younger siblings to adapt and live their lives independently. Ask if they want a driving lesson before their drivers test. Bring home clothes for your younger sister that you know she'll love.



James Ellis | Cartoonist

Think about the activities you used to do with your family before you left. Ask your dad to get breakfast at the pancake place you both love. Help your mom with Christmas shopping. Hang out one-on-one with your siblings. Graciously answer the questions about post-

graduation plans. Take advantage of spending time with loved ones, despite the tension. Mend relationships and have real conversations.

And don't forget your family at Baylor. Sending a sweet holiday text or calling a friend goes a long way. This time of year can be hard

for some people; reaching out can mean more than you know.

We are the youngest we will ever be this Christmas. We're not always going to have this time with our families, so we should take advantage of it.

Don't forget about us during **Christmas break**. Follow our socials!



Instagram: [baylorlariat](https://www.instagram.com/baylorlariat)
Facebook: [baylorlariat](https://www.facebook.com/baylorlariat)
Twitter: [bulariat](https://twitter.com/bulariat)



Meet the Staff

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Emma Weidmann*

NEWS EDITOR
Ashlyn Beck*

ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR
Rachel Chiang

SPORTS EDITOR
Foster Nicholas

ARTS & LIFE EDITOR
Olivia Turner*

OPINION EDITOR
Erika Kuehl*

COPY EDITORS
Delaney Newhouse
Isabelle Ruff

PHOTO EDITOR
Cameron McCollum*
Kassidy Tsikitas

WEB EDITOR
Julien Hajenius*

CARTOONIST
James Ellis*

NEWS WRITERS
Rory Dulock
MacKenzie Grizzard
Piper Rutherford
Emily Schoch
Josh Siatkowski
Audrey Valenzuela
Kristy Volmert

SPORTS WRITERS
Nate Maki
Grant Morrison
Jackson Posey

ARTS & LIFE WRITERS
Katherine Hatcher
Kalena Reynolds

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Caleb Garcia
Chloe McCauley
Masha Mittanasala
Mary Thurmond

INTERNS
Bella Whitmore

ADVERTISING SALES REPRESENTATIVES
Hannah Ciprian
Olivia Perry
Anthony Poto
Josie Rice

MARKETING ANALYST
Grant Plieger

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETER
Krista McLaughlin

Lariat TV News

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
Joe Pratt

MANAGING EDITOR
Kaitlin Sides

SPORTS DIRECTOR
Braden Murray

BROADCAST REPORTERS
Maya Dulock
Clare Goodyear
Lauren Holcomb
Marissa Muniz
Irma Peña
Gracie Savage
Claire-Marie Scott

*Asterisks indicate members of The Editorial Board

Contact Us

General Questions:
Lariat@baylor.edu
254-710-1712

Sports:
LariatSports@baylor.edu

Arts:
LariatArts@baylor.edu

Opinion:
Lariat-Letters@baylor.edu

Opinion

The Baylor Lariat welcomes reader viewpoints through letters to the editor and guest columns. Opinions expressed in the Lariat are not necessarily those of the Baylor administration, the Baylor Board of Regents, the student body or the Student Publications Board.

Editorials, Columns & Letters

Editorials express the opinions of the Lariat Editorial Board. Lariat letters and columns are the opinions of an individual and not the Baylor Lariat.

Lariat Letters

To submit a Lariat Letter, email Lariat-Letters@baylor.edu. Letters should be a maximum of 300 words. The letter is not guaranteed to be published.

Watch out for online influencers, beauty ads

SARINA TEJANI
Reporter

Social media continues trends seen in older forms of media, said Dr. Alec Tefertiller, an assistant professor in Journalism, Public Relations and New Media.

“Social media has the same problem we’ve seen in magazines and television for decades in that it promotes certain norms about what our bodies should look like,” Tefertiller said.

He added that social media can have an even stronger effect because it often feels more personal.

“The difference with social media is the person promoting those images is often someone you feel like you know personally, even if you’ve never actually met them,” he said.

According to an article by the Boston Children’s Digital Wellness Lab, this connection can make social media influencers even more impactful.

“The closer we feel that we are to someone, the more influence they have in our lives,” Tefertiller said. “That can be very harmful if the messages were getting make us feel bad about our bodies.”



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

LIKE AND FOLLOW Overconsumption of social media content negatively impacts body image.

Hollywood, Md., senior Madison Pyles is the vice president of Active Minds, a campus organization dedicated to mental health awareness and reducing stigma, and she shared her thoughts on the issue.

“Social media offers an unrealistic beauty standard that people can’t help but compare themselves to,” Pyles said. “Students will too often focus on an ideal many beauty influencers

have achieved through unrealistic cosmetic procedures, surgical means or unhealthy dieting tactics.”

Pyles pointed out the dangers of blindly following trends and products promoted online. She noted that it’s common to see ads for products like HIMS, HERS or med spas and drugs like Ozempic, Mounjaro or Wegovy for weight loss, but not Lexapro, Prozac or Zoloft,

which are anxiety meds.

“Influencers make their livelihood often from promoting products that shape our beauty standards,” she said. “When a beauty influencer flaunts a new nose job or a freshly plumped set of lips, you can’t help but wonder why you don’t meet these standards.”

For students feeling pressured by social media standards, Pyles recommended becoming more aware of biases and ads that promote beauty norms.

“Next time you are on social media, count the number of implicit or explicit ads relating to our current beauty norms,” she said. “Recognize that other people hide their imperfections. Trust people, not pictures.”

She also reminded students of the resources available at Baylor, including Academic Live Care, GAIN (a women’s weightlifting group) and Active Minds.

“We help connect students with resources that can support them,” Pyles said. “As an officer, I am happy to accompany anyone to the Baylor Counseling Center or discuss some of the resources here at Baylor to support you and your mental health.”

Graduate student balances roles in Men’s Choir, coaching

BLAKE HOLLINGSWORTH
Reporter

Briggs Ellyson is an accounting graduate student who balances multiple roles, as assistant coach of the Live Oak Falcons middle school football team and president of Baylor’s Men’s Choir.

As the Falcons’ wide receiver and linebacker coach, Ellyson said he finds joy in mentoring young athletes. His role allows him to impart life lessons alongside football strategies, emphasizing trust and confidence.

“Coaching is about giving them knowledge not just about football, but about life,” Ellyson said.

He also integrates faith and values into his coaching through activities like the team’s “word of the day” sessions, according to Kyle Carter, Live Oak Junior High head coach.

“The kids feel loved by him. It’s easy to tell that just by watching their

interactions,” Carter said. “He genuinely cares, and kids can feel that.”

Ellyson explained his motivation behind mentoring young students, saying he had his own mentor throughout school.

“I went to a K-12 school as well, in Austin,” Ellyson said. “I had a coach who coached me from sixth-grade football all the way up until I graduated. We developed a really strong bond, and he was a mentor for me in middle school and high school and showed me how to be the right kind of man. So, having his influence in my life really spurred me on to want to be that for other kids.”

Trust, a cornerstone of his leadership style, is something Ellyson nurtures through personal connections with his players.

“Learning their names, understanding their strengths and showing belief in them builds that bond,” he said.

As president of Baylor’s Men’s Choir, Ellyson applies his servant leadership

philosophy, inspired by his faith.

“Being a servant leader means doing the unglamorous work, treating people with kindness and leading by example,” he said. “It allows you to actually get to know the people and develop a genuine bonding relationship with them and be an example of Christ.”

Ellyson also credits his experiences with teaching him valuable lessons in time management and delegation.

“You can’t do everything yourself,” he said. “It’s about trusting others and letting them grow through responsibility.”

Looking ahead, Ellyson hopes to blend his passion for leadership with his professional aspirations, aiming to become a C-suite executive like his father.

“It’s through looking at his experiences that I’ve kind of developed what I want,” Ellyson said. “I think it’s really easy for kids to look at their parents and say, ‘I want to be like them,’ especially if they have good parents.”



Photo courtesy of Briggs Ellyson

LEADERSHIP Assistant coach of a middle school football team and Men’s choir president Briggs Ellyson wears many hats.

STAY IN THE KNOW

BY KNOWING WHERE TO GO!

THE BAYLOR LARIAT'S
MORNING
BUZZ

EVERY TUESDAY-FRIDAY
www.baylorlariat.com/subscribe

LARIAT
TV
NEWS
BAYLOR

YouTube
BAYLORLARIAT

WWW.
BAYLOR
LARIAT
.COM

24/7 NEWS/ARTS/SPORTS
www.baylorlariat.com

BAYLOR
LARIAT
News for the students by the students

PRINT PUBLICATIONS
on newsstands for
Special Baylor Events

BAYLOR
LARIAT
RADIO

Spotify
DON'T FEED THE BEARS
and www.baylorlariat.com

BAYLOR
LARIAT
Social
News for the students by the students

@BAYLORLARIAT

BAYLORLARIAT

@BULARIAT
@BULARIATSPORTS

FOLLOW US

Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor

The Gift of Baylor Football



Mary Thurmond | Photographer

EXTRA EFFORT Sophomore running back Dawson Pendergrass moves the ball to the end zone during Baylor football's 45-17 win over Kansas on November 30 at McLane Stadium.



Kassidy Tsikitas | Photo Editor



Mary Thurmond | Photographer

FAMILY Baylor football celebrates their sixth consecutive 45-17 win over Kansas with a prayer on November 30 at McLane Stadium.



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

HURDLES Sophomore running back Dawson Pendergrass jumps over the defense during Baylor's 45-17 win against Kansas on Saturday at McLane Stadium.



Mary Thurmond | Photographer

Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

The more the merrier Christmas on 5th open to Baylor, Waco

SHANE MEAD
Reporter

Christmas on 5th Street, Baylor’s annual Christmas celebration, takes place this week on Thursday. The celebration begins at 5 p.m. and runs until about 9 p.m.

The event will feature what students and locals of Waco enjoyed in years prior, like local food vendors, activities such as crafts and carriage rides, performances from various Baylor students and the lighting of the Christmas tree.

“It feels like the end of the semester the second that tree gets lit,” Huntington Beach, Calif., senior Anthony Kumaric said.

With Christmas on 5th Street coming just days before finals begin, it allows for one last celebration at Baylor before students return home for winter break.

This year, Chicago junior Raghav Edara, Vice President of the Baylor Activities Council, says inclusivity is a large goal for his team.

“That is actually one of our biggest things this year, to make it as inclusive to the Baylor community as much as it is to the Waco community,” Edara said. “Regardless of if you’re a Waco family or if you’re just a Baylor friend group, you feel the same way: in the Christmas spirit.”

According to Edara, this will be done by offering activities ranging from crafts which kids can enjoy, to the newest edition to Christmas on 5th — Christmas karaoke in the Bill Daniel Student Center.

As the Christmas lights shine bright and the cannons fill the air with snow, students from all walks of life, even those who are not religiously Christian or don’t celebrate Christmas, can still feel the holiday spirit, Edara said.

“At the end of the day, Christmas is about coming together and being grateful for our friends and family,” Edara said. “I think it’s



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

SPREADING CHRISTMAS SPIRIT This year’s Christmas on 5th celebration will feature its traditional activities such as the Bear Ballet Club’s “The Nutcracker” excerpts and pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Additionally, karaoke will be offered as an activity in the Bill Daniel Student Center.

genuinely just an expression of love and affection between people [through] the season of giving and holidays.”

Another way Edara and the Student Activities Council aim to bring inclusivity to the table is by hosting food vendors primarily of small, local businesses, rather than

larger chains.

“We’ve been trying our level best to focus more on local business because we really want the smaller businesses of Waco to come to our events,” Edara said.

As in years prior, all of the merchandise sales from Christmas on Fifth are directly

going to fund Unbound Now Waco, a nonprofit organization fighting against human trafficking, Edara said.

“It’s nice that they’re doing whatever they can,” Kumaric said. “With the huge crowd [Baylor is] getting, they might as well put it to a good cause.”

Presents for every passion: A holiday gift guide

OLIVIA TURNER
Arts & Life Editor

If you’re avoiding gift card buying this Christmas, here are ample shopping ideas for each and every character you hold close in your life. Perhaps you’ve befriended a gamer, are siblings with a fashionista or are dating a music lover, but are stumped as to what to get them. Well, look no further.

From classic gifts to out-of-the-box ideas and hobby-based subscriptions, these shopping recommendations are bound to warm the heart of the recipient based on what they love in life. Tailor to your loved ones’ quirks this Christmas with this interest-based holiday gift guide.

THE FOODIE

For all the people who have refined palates, the ideas are endless when it comes to gifting. But what do they really want for Christmas? Chances are, if they’re the known chef in the family or friend group, they’ve already got their kitchen stocked to the max with appliances, gadgets and fancy spices and seasonings.

Some more creative gift ideas for the cook in your life start with a hand-made ticket for a dinner date to their favorite restaurant. However, if a bougie night out is a little out of your price range, consider getting some off-beat trinkets to spice up their kitchen. If they enjoy the iconic talk show Hot Ones and have ever wondered if they themselves could endure the heat, the show’s website offers several sauce sets and pairings to try at home.

There are certain things some kitchens can never have enough of, and that includes salt and pepper shakers and oil and vinegar cruet sets. If they already have these, get them some cute sets they can use for special occasions.

Subscription boxes are gaining increasing popularity with foodies, so paying for a few months of subscriptions like Universal Yums or Pickle of the Month Club could make for great gifts for all the snack lovers



out there.

Last but not least: cookbooks! To plug some local fame, Magnolia has a killer cookbook which lets the reader in on the secrets of some of the restaurant’s most coveted recipes. Perhaps your food fanatic is a lover of FX’s “The Bear.” Well, unbeknownst to many viewers, one of the show’s stars, Matty Matheson, is a real chef and has his very own written guide to making masterful soups, salads and sandwiches.

THE GAMER

These suggestions are for video gamers, board gamers and card gamers alike.

For those friends and family members who find themselves parked at their computer monitor most weekends wrapped up in several tense rounds of their game of choice, their setup might be in need of a little drip. A quality mouse pad like those from The Mousepad Company could add some color and comfort to their desk, especially if there’s a wrist rest included. Some adhesive, color-changing LED lights to stick to the back of the monitor could also help to brighten their space, creating a setup that’s stream-worthy.

Often overlooked is the under-the-desk drink cooler for those players who like to have a cold refreshment ready to go in between rounds. Mini Frigidaire coolers are surprisingly affordable for the convenience they provide, and some even light up!

If your gamer is more of a physical game player, perhaps they need a nice, new deck of cards. If so, Art of Play is the place to look. Their classy, artsy cards are made in practically every theme imaginable. Or, if board games are what you’re looking for, Cardhaus has all of the hottest new releases that



will have the entire family gathered around and wanting to join in.

THE BOOKWORM

It’s true the purpose of this guide is to stay away from gift cards, but the urge to suggest a Fabled gift card couldn’t be resisted simply because Fabled is such a magical experience, especially for bookworms. This local bookshop also has the option to give Booklover Boxes, which will add a few fresh reads to their likely extensive bookshelf.

For bookworms, their books are their babies, which means they deserve plenty of accessories to help keep them in the best shape possible. Some bookmarks and customized corner markers from Etsy will ensure that there’s no need for dog-eared pages and make for cute stocking stuffers. Take the personalization a step further with a book embosser to mark their printed treasures as their very own.

Convenience is another large component of book-reading. If your bookworm wants to be able to hold a book in one hand and a warm mug in another, get them a page holder. The options for these include everything from wood to quartz, but frog and floral resin ones are especially cute.

Maybe your bookworm prefers versions of consumption outside of physical, paper books. For all those Kindle readers out there, a tablet bed/table stand will take their reading experience to the next level of comfort. Kiss those neck strains goodbye! On the other spectrum of electronic books are audio books. If there’s an audio bookworm in your life, consider purchasing an Audible subscription for them.

THE FITNESS BUFF

With most workout freaks likely already enjoying their all-inclusive memberships at their local gym, Christmas shopping can be a little tricky.

Thankfully, there are several gadgets to improve their gym experience that squat racks and bench presses just can’t provide.

A portable neck fan will work wonders for those who love to stay fit but hate to sweat. Speaking of sweat — gym shoes can get smelly if sweaty feet marinate in them on the car ride home, so consider getting your gym rat a pair of comfy slides from Cloud Slides to slip into post-workout.

Any fitness buff knows after-gym care is key in maintaining a healthy body. A foam roller will help to prevent sore muscles after a hard day’s work. To take it a step further, gift them some luxury epsom salts to soak in. These come in delicious, therapeutic scents like lavender, eucalyptus spearmint and honey almond. If your particular fitness buff is into crafting post-workout shakes, get them a trusty BlenderBottle so they can sip on the go.

One thing these fitness freaks can never get enough of are socks, particularly the Nike dri fit ones. They always seem to get lost in the wash or mysteriously end up in siblings’ and roommates’ sock drawers. Or if they’re not into plain white Nike socks, Adidas has some cutesy pastel ones.

Lastly, if your gym rat is more of a pilates princess than an iron-pumping Sam Sulek, Bala bangles are a splurge, but will ensure she’s stylish while she sweats.



Illustrations by
Chloe McCauley

THE HOMEBODY

The homebody is unarguably the easiest character to shop for since the items they crave can be found in almost any store. However, here are some choice items that stand out for your couch potato.

The Comfy blanket sweatshirt is the ultimate homebody must-have. Instead of dragging a blanket around,

why not wear it? Or, if sweatshirts aren’t their vibe, a robe from Pottery Barn and heatable slippers from Warmies will ensure coziness with class. If they’re looking for a buddy to snuggle with, spoil them with a soft, adorable Jellycat plush.

Homebodies love their space to smell nice, meaning candles, essential oils and wax melts are always welcome gifts. To satisfy their taste and without forcing your homebody to leave their comfortable abode, purchase them their caffeine treat of choice. Some fun brands include Chamberlain Coffee which has coffee flavors galore, Harney & Sons which has teas fit for an Englishman and Encha with its ceremonial-grade matcha.

Now that your homebody is comfortable and thirst-quenched, keep them entertained with a premium subscription to their favorite streaming service. Some of the most popular include Netflix, Hulu and Disney+.

THE FASHIONISTA

The fashionista is a tough creature to shop for as they already have the swag and style that makes them known for their fire fits among friends and family. This one might require some out-of-the-box shopping.

If surprises are what they dig, Sephora advent calendars are the perfect present for your person, but make sure to give them soon so they can open their final surprise on Christmas morning! For the perfume lovers, a Scentbird subscription will allow your fashionista to explore several luxury scents. Make sure to take the quiz first and answer according to their vibe!

For all the adornment lovers, a cutesy jewelry tray will come in handy to keep their rings, earrings and bracelets in one place. On that



AP Photo

DRAW IT UP No. 15 Baylor men’s basketball head coach Scott Drew talks to his team in the second half of the Bears’ 76-72 loss to No. 25 UConn Wednesday night at Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn.

No. 15 Baylor falls to No. 25 UConn, 76-72

JACKSON POSEY
Sports Writer

Amidst a flurry of foul trouble and despite a career night from freshman guard Robert O. Wright III, No. 15 Baylor lost its Big 12-Big East Challenge game against No. 25 UConn, 76-72, Wednesday night at Gampel Pavilion in Storrs, Conn.

Wright put on a banner performance for the Bears, scoring a career-high 22 points on 9-of-14 shooting. Junior center Josh Ojjanwuna made history too, securing a career-high 14 rebounds. But Baylor (5-3) couldn't overcome 25 fouls as a team, as fifth-year forwards Norchad Omier and Jalen Celestine fouled out and were nearly joined on the bench by redshirt junior Langston Love and Ojjanwuna, who finished with four fouls apiece.

Both teams entered the game missing key contributors. UConn's leading scorer and lone returning starter, Alex Karaban, missed his second consecutive game in concussion protocol. On the other side, athletic Baylor freshman wing VJ Edgcombe — who presumably

would've guarded Karaban, had both been healthy — was a late scratch with a hamstring issue.

Omier woke up the scoreboard with a spinning, fadeaway jumper just inside the free-throw line, turning over his left shoulder and hitting nothing but net. The Miami transfer played 31 minutes before ultimately fouling out, recording 14 points and seven rebounds in the process. Baylor won his minutes by two points.

Love earned his third career start in Edgcombe's stead. He jumped out to a quick start, scoring five straight after the first media timeout to spark a 10-0 Baylor run that featured multiple blocked jumpers by the Bears. After returning to action less than two weeks ago, Love finished with a season-high 16 points on 6-of-12 shooting in 36 minutes, a career-high for a non-overtime game.

The Huskies quickly answered back with a 10-2 run of their own, fueled by a pair of 3-pointers from St. Mary's transfer Aidan Mahaney, who eclipsed the 1,000 career point mark on a buzzer-beating set shot off a baseline out-of-bounds play. After a slow start, UConn (6-3) took the

lead with a 9-0 run late in the half before a go-ahead layup by fifth-year guard Jeremy Roach sent the Bears to halftime up 37-36.

The battle of former Montverde Academy teammates Wright III and Huskies freshman forward Liam McNeeley provided much-needed scoring boosts for their respective teams. The five-star freshmen combined for 29 points, with McNeeley's eight rebounds and three blocks proving critical in a winning effort.

UConn spent much of the second half holding a lead — a lead which spiked as high as seven and all but evaporated as Love and Jayden Nunn hit back-to-back jumpers to pull back within two. The Huskies had seven more points off turnovers than the Bears and six more on free throws, but they entered the final four minutes with a 64-62 lead.

UConn's Samson Johnson fouled out with under two minutes remaining, just after Omier drew his fourth whistle. Ojjanwuna drew a foul, hitting one of two free throws to bring it within four. A flubbed Husky pass ricocheted out of bounds,

giving the Bears another chance at it. Ojjanwuna corralled an errant 3-pointer from Love and threw the exit pass into the awaiting arms of UConn's Jaylin Stewart.

Huskies head coach Dan Hurley called a timeout with 1:07 remaining, his Huskies leading 68-64. The two-time national championship-winning coach has drawn fire in recent weeks for his emotive responses to referees, but his team played composed down the stretch. The Huskies ran 17 more seconds off the clock before eventually ceding a foul on Solo Ball, who converted both free throws.

Wright sprinted down the other way, answering Ball with a quick layup on the other end. The teams scrambled over a loose ball on the left sideline, but full-court press efforts ultimately failed to produce a turnover. After the clock stoppage, Baylor allowed a clean sideline inbounds pass and allowed Hassan Diara to dribble for eight seconds before deciding to foul.

Diara hit the second free throw; Wright hit a no-look reverse layup six seconds later. Up three points with 16.7 seconds remaining, Stewart and Wright got tangled up

on the inbounds play. Wright fell, as Stewart escaped up the left wing. The sophomore wing hit both free throws to extend the lead to 73-68.

Wright missed his third attempt at a sprinting layup, but McNeeley fell out of bounds with the rebound, breathing a final blast of hope into the Bears. Omier caught the inbounds pass on the block, went up strong for an and-one and sank the money shot. He then fouled out to send the Huskies back to the line. With 5.9 seconds remaining and Diara at the line, UConn led 73-70.

Diara missed his first — and made the second.

Wright hit a final full-court, buzzer-beating layup with 0.7 seconds left, and a review with zeroes on the clock judged the Bears to have fouled with 0.4 seconds remaining. This time, Diara sunk both, cementing a 76-72 bounce-back victory for the two-time defending national champions.

The Bears to 5-3, including a 2-3 mark against ranked teams. They'll play three games against mid-major teams before opening Big 12 play against Utah on Dec. 31.

Football adds 21-player class on National Signing Day

FOSTER NICHOLAS
Sports Editor

Baylor football inked 21 players as the pen was put to paper on National Signing Day. Head coach Dave Aranda announced that the team had added 10 offensive players, 10 defensive players and one kicker on Wednesday.

The Bears currently have the No. 3 class in the Big 12 and No. 34 class in the nation, according to 247Sports. It marks the highest-ranked class by 247Sports since 2018 when the green and gold ranked No. 29 in the nation.

"Very impressed with our group of young men that are coming in. Their quality of character and their ability to perform on the field, I think, is very, very strong and is something that we're going to get to here really quick," Aranda said during his first-ever national signing day press conference. "The excitement and the ability to kind of take the next step as a program is something that they see, and it's something that they want to be a part of and have their imprint on. And I'm all for that."

Aranda said the team was focused on adding wide receivers and linebackers in the 2025 class. The Bears brought in four wide receivers: Jacksonville, Fla., three-star Chase Collier; Pearland three-star Ashtyn Jones; Pearland three-star Jacorey Watson; and Red Oak four-star Taz Williams.

Baylor added three linebackers: Houston four-star Kaleb Burns; Spring three-star Trent Spence; and Lancaster three-star Ke'breion "KB" Winston. The green and gold also gathered two outside linebackers: Rosharon three-star Christopher Johnson and Dallas four-star Kamaurn Morgan.

The class includes five four-star prospects, including Burns, Morgan, Williams and running backs Pauls Valley, Okla., Caden Knighten and North Richland Michael Turner. Aranda said associate head coach Khenon Hall played a key role in reeling in the elite talent.

"Khenon fit the bill for us," Aranda said.

"He's been loyal, he's been way effective in communication and partnership with other coaches, bringing guys along, and has been a guy that I think the best is yet to come from him. I think the running back room and what they did this past year only shows what he can do on the field and off."

Of the 21 players brought in by the Bears, 16 played their high school football careers in Texas. The other five recruits reside in Mississippi (2), Colorado (1), Florida (1) and Oklahoma (1).

"The best high school football, the best players and the best coaches in the nation reside in the state of Texas," Aranda said. "We are thrilled to bring in 16 more Texas products into our program, a program that is built on the foundation of all the hard work done by the Texas High School Coaches Association in preparing these young men for the next level."

Lorena three-star defensive lineman Jackson Blackwell, who has been a Baylor fan since birth, signed with the Bears on Wednesday. Aranda said the ability to keep local talent in Waco has been missing and the addition of Blackwell was a big win in that sense.

"I think it's kind of the first time, really, we've been able to do that despite efforts in the past," Aranda said of keeping local talent home. "Probably the thing I'm most proud of is that. There's a lot of lot of effort into it, and was very competitive with Jackson, and love his family, and love everything that he's about, and he's such a great fit here."

The Bears added one quarterback, Coppel three-star Edward Griffin III, and one kicker, Monument, Colo., three-star Rhett Armstrong, who is the No. 5 kicker in the nation according to 247Sports. Aranda called Griffin "the complete package" and said the addition of Armstrong is a "home run" as he will make an instant impact.

After adding just 12 freshmen to the 2024 recruiting class, Aranda hopes to build on the larger 2025 class heading into the transfer portal window and the 2026 class.

"It shows what happens when you believe in people," Aranda said. "I think it shows what is possible. There's a whole lot more that is possible. I think the recruiting, where it is now, we want to take the next step, and we're aiming to do that with this next class and the transfer class that's going to come along with it... We're as strong as anyone out there. We're coming."

The green and gold rounded out the defensive class with four members of the secondary: Trophy Club three-star cornerback

Leo Almanza Jr., Tyler three-star safety Demetrius Brisbon, Carrollton safety Bo Onu, Gunter three-star safety Colin Peacock. On offense, Baylor picked up Columbia, Miss., offensive lineman Harrison Cluff, Flowood, Miss., offensive lineman Matthew Parker and Austin tight end Brody Wilhelm.

The bowl-bound Bears await the announcement of their final game of the year on Selection Day. Matchups will be announced on Dec. 8 and broadcast on ESPN.



Mary Thurmond | Photographer

ON THE TRAIL Head coach Dave Aranda and Baylor football brought in a 21-player 2025 class on national signing day, including five four-stars and 16 guys from the state of Texas.

No. 4 seed Baylor volleyball readies for Wofford



Mesha Mittanasala | Photographer

FREAK OUT The Ferrell Center will host the first two rounds of the NCAA tournament, giving the No. 4 seed Baylor Bears the opportunity to benefit from a home-court advantage.

GRANT MORRISON
Sports Writer

For the fifth time in Baylor volleyball head coach Ryan McGuyre's 10-year tenure, the Bears are set to host the first two rounds of the NCAA Tournament in the Ferrell Center. They were chosen as the No. 4 seed in the Lower Right Regional and No. 15 overall squad in the 64-team bracket.

Baylor (22-7, 14-4), relishes the opportunity to play in front of its home crowd, fully prepared to make the most of the home-court advantage. In a volatile sport liable for big momentum swings, an engaged fan presence can be a massive boon to a team.

"Having your home crowd,

one, makes it tougher on opponents, and two, makes for a quicker resurgence in the match if there's ever a lull," McGuyre said.

Senior libero Lauren Briseño, along with graduate setter Jackie Barrett Frazier and junior opposite hitter Allie Sczech, was named to the All-Big 12 second team earlier this week. Senior outside hitter Elise McGhee was a unanimous selection to the first team. Each of the seniors is looking to make the most of their final home matches.

"Going to battle, even if we were at home or away, we knew we're going to get this done," Briseño said.

Baylor's first tournament match comes Thursday against the Wofford Terriers (23-

8), who come to Waco with momentum after winning their second straight — and second ever — Southern Conference Championship.

The Terriers spread the ball out on offense, with four players boasting top-10 hitting percentages in their conference. As a team they lead the Southern Conference in kills, assists, blocks and digs.

Their talented pair of young setters, sophomore Taylor Pecht and freshman Maddy Frazier, split time on the court, both managing the offense with efficiency.

But where the Terriers truly excel is their defense. Junior middle blocker Annemarie Rakoski leads the Southern Conference with 133 total

blocks on the season, while freshman middle blocker Bradley Brown isn't far behind at sixth.

Wofford sophomore libero Laney Klika makes a hefty contribution defusing attacks as well, leading the league with an impressive 5.23 digs per set—a number that would put her atop the Big 12 leaderboard as well.

Though Baylor's focus is on the match in front of them, McGuyre anticipates its potential matchup with No. 5 seed Dayton (29-2), whom the Bears will face Friday if they secure a win against Wofford and if Dayton defeats South Carolina (16-11).

"Dayton's really, really good. All the teams coming to

this tournament are — they're champions; they're winners," McGuyre said.

For McGuyre, the matchup would also serve as a reunion with Dayton head coach Tim Horsmon, who hired McGuyre as an assistant during his tenure as head coach at Maryland.

"I wouldn't be at Baylor if it wasn't for Tim," McGuyre said. "There's a great friendship there."

Friendships aside, a matchup against Dayton would be a welcome challenge for Baylor, considering the Flyers suffered only one regular season loss before being swept in their conference championship against Loyola Chicago.

Like Wofford, Dayton leads their conference in kills, assists and digs, with the added bonus of holding its opponents to the fewest assists, kills and service aces, as well as the lowest hitting percentage.

The Dayton offense runs through senior setter Alyssa Miller, who holds a nationwide top-15 10.87 assists per set, while senior outside hitter Lexie Almodovar's 4.91 kills per set ranks seventh overall.

But first, the Bears have to take care of business against Wofford.

"If you don't play like it's your last game, it will be," McGuyre said.

The match is set for a 7 p.m. start time in the Ferrell Center, and will stream on ESPN+.



DON'T FEED THE BEARS
BAYLOR LARIAT RADIO

DON'T FEED THE BEARS IS BACK FOR SEASON 4!

Join us
EVERY WEDNESDAY
Highlighting feature stories and smaller sports around campus

and

EVERY FRIDAY
Previewing Baylor football's weekly match-up



only on
Spotify






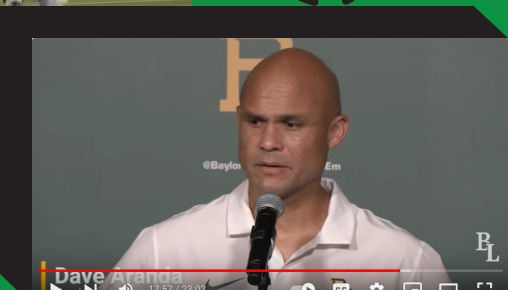

BAYLOR LARIAT
News for the students by the students

Tune in to


Lariat TV News every Friday


for your weekly updates on whats happening around Baylor University

 **YouTube**



SUBSCRIBE TO OUR CHANNEL!
@BAYLORLARIAT





LARIAT TV NEWS
BAYLOR

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS from A1

flipping a few switches.”

Dickey said the Baylor Activities Council works with L&G Sound to have the tree light up right after the crowd counts down.

“This careful coordination ensures everything is in sync and the tree lights up at the exact moment,” Dickey said.

The hours of preparation and dedication spent by both parties makes Christmas on Fifth Street as extravagant as other Baylor traditions

like Homecoming or running the Baylor Line.

Edara said the BAC is excited for students to see what they have in store for this year’s Christmas celebration.

“This year, we’re taking it a step further with special effects, adding even more excitement to the event,” Edara said. “We’re also thrilled to bring snow to Christmas on Fifth this year, adding an extra layer of holiday magic.”

FESTIVE FINALE from A1

Friends Rescue, a no-kill animal rescue facility that works to save Central Texas dogs who need a home or an escape from shelters that may have to euthanize them.

“We’ve always supported them,” Robert Schmidt said.

Robert Schmidt said the couple’s main goal was always to “give to the community,” and they hope that viewers will also give back to the community by offering a donation to Fuzzy Friends. Both Lana and Robert Schmidt said that the donations they’ve been able to give to Fuzzy Friends have been rewarding, amounting to thousands of dollars in the past five years. According to Lana Schmidt, their biggest donation year was 2020, when they raised approximately \$13,400.

“About fifty dollars is enough to save one pet,” Lana Schmidt said.

The donations received from visitors of the light display have helped Fuzzy Friends save a tremendous number of pets, according to Lana Schmidt.

The couple said they usually begin to set up starting in mid-October and finish in about six weeks. They said having groups come volunteer to help them set up and tear down the display each year makes a huge difference.

This year, a group of Baylor students volunteering with Steppin’ Out came to the Schmidt’s home and worked for a couple of hours to help them set up.

The couple also said that they are greeted by The Waco Trolley about twice a night on most days of the week as it makes the rounds for its 90-minute seasonal Christmas Lights Tour. The Schmidt House is the trolley’s final stop and grand finale.

According to Robert Schmidt, many of their neighbors have started to decorate their houses more for Christmas as their lights display has grown. Robert Schmidt said that further down in their neighborhood and in some surrounding areas, there are plenty more beautiful light displays that are, though smaller than theirs,

sights worth seeing.

Lana Schmidt said that the house’s busiest time tends to be the week of Christmas. When families come to enjoy the lights, the Schmidts sit on the porch and pass out candy canes to visitors. The upkeep and management of the display makes Christmastime especially busy for the Schmidts, who have to stay at home in the evenings to monitor everything.

“We turn it on around 5 p.m., make sure everything is up, and then we have to babysit it all night. We shut it off usually around 9:30 p.m., but sometimes later than 11,” Lana Schmidt said.

On Christmas Eve and Christmas night, Lana Schmidt said the display is usually up until about 1 a.m.

Each morning, they usually spend around a couple hours cleaning everything up.

“It’s like working full time for about a four-month span,” Lana Schmidt said.

The couple said that despite the hard work, it’s well worth it for the holiday joy it brings to the community and the donations they are able to give to Fuzzy Friends.

Robert Schmidt said he is very glad it ended up turning into what it has, and he feels that the experience has been very rewarding.

“It’s been wonderful for us, wonderful for the people, for the charity and the pets,” Lana Schmidt said.

The Schmidts said although they are unable to continue to manage it themselves, they hope that another group will be able to take over the tradition and keep it alive for the community.

“It’s made to give to the community. Give it to the people for free. If they feel like they want to donate, you give that back to the community, like we give to the shelter,” Lana Schmidt said.

Despite the outcome, the Schmidts hope to see the best turnout this year, given that it may be the last year the display is up.

“[It’s] a little Christmas spirit for some of those hard hearts,” Robert Schmidt said.

GIFT GUIDE from A5

note, one type of underrated jewelry that will put their show game on a whole ‘nother level are sneaker charms.

Another gift to keep your fashionista’s sneakers in ship shape is this shoe cleaning set, which can also be used to keep her Frye boots nice and clean if she so desires these fashionable shoes.

Shopping for guy fashionistas is the real challenge ... or is it? It might be simpler than you think, especially with these recommendations.

A cashmere scarf, can spruce up any winter outfit. To keep his other cashmere and knit goods soft through the years, purchase this sweater depiller.

Just like the fitness buffs, fashionable dudes can never have enough socks. Patterned socks are something a little nicer to keep his toes warm through the winter. Finally, if he doesn’t have a corduroy Dickies hat, get it for him. This classic Texas brand cap will add a little flavor to any fit.

THE ARTIST

For the artist, you’ll need to think creatively. The most standout gift for this artsy person has got to be a watercolor pen and portable paintbox as seen on Instagram and used by watercolor artist Leslie Stroz. This gift will allow them to paint on-the-go with ease and convenience. Additionally, get them a canvas tote bag with some cute patches and pins to carry their other everyday art supplies.

To add a little flair to their art studio, some famous art print posters and suncatchers will do the trick. A mug will serve well those artists who need a little something to sip while they sketch, or may even be used as a rinse cup for brushes, if we’re being honest.

THE MUSIC LOVER

Here are some gift ideas for music lovers of all kinds. Depending on how your music lover likes to listen, you might want to get them a cleaning kit for their AirPods and one for their turntable and vinyls. To set next to their turntable or speaker is an artist prayer candle which can feature whatever musician they love most.

JBL has some of the best speakers on the market, and a portable, waterproof mini speaker will allow them to listen anywhere from the shower to the beach.

If they like to wear their heart on their sleeve in terms of love for their favorite artist, consider getting your music maniac a band tee. Old School Tees has some great picks for classic rock lovers. Or, if they like to do a little playing themselves, a guitar pick necklace is a functional and meaningful accessory to gift them.

The ultimate music lover gift is of course concert tickets. Depending on who is touring in the area, you could very well make their entire year a whole lot more special and memorable with this thoughtful Christmas gift.

Wondering what to do in Waco? Scan here!



University Rentals

The perfect apartment in the perfect location.

1111 Speight Ave. (254) 754-1436



24-25 YEARBOOK

THIS YEAR'S TO-DO'S

TAKE MY SENIOR YEARBOOK PORTRAIT

DON'T FORGET

WWW.LAURENSTUDIOS.COM

"SCHEDULE APPOINTMENT"

CLIENT ID - 25BAYLOR-ID NUMBER

SIC 'EM!

WANNA GET YOUR BAYLOR ROUNDUP YEARBOOK?

It's easy.



SCAN ME

ROUNDUP YEARBOOK BAYLOR UNIVERSITY